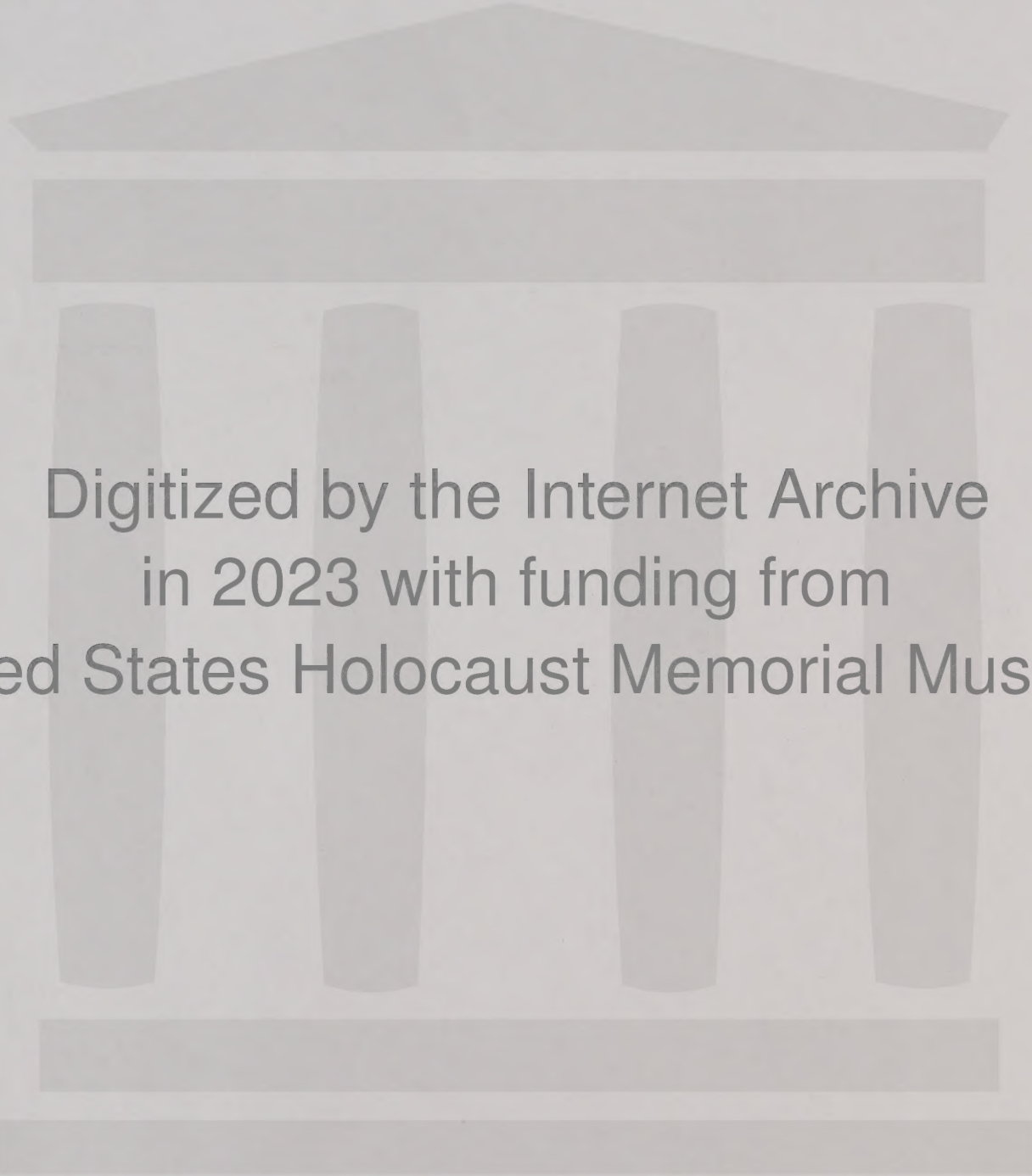




Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

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June 27, 1997

To Whom it may Concern:

The following is but a brief summary of the experience I had as a holocaust and death camp survivor. Many things still come to mind after the war years, and many memories are still very painful, yet the following will give you a small insight into this painful past and my reflections as an Auschwitz survivor.

My married name is Barbara Dobo, during my imprisonment at the Auschwitz Death Camp, my maiden name was Borblal Reich.

I remember it was around the middle of April, 1944 that my parents, my grandmother and myself were forced from our home in Szikszó, Hungary. We were first taken to a holding area called Kassa, formerly known as Kosice, in Czechoslovakia.

My parents, grandmother and I were held there with other Jews from our town for about 2 weeks. Then, either April 14th or 15th, our "Passover Holiday," my family was transported by boxcar, people were crammed so tightly that we could barely breathe. There was no water to drink, no food. One simple bucket or pail was there for bodily functions. Needless to say, the conditions were sub-human, we were all in a terrible state of fear. I don't know how long the boxcar ride was that took us to Auschwitz, it was dark in the boxcar - days were nights, time was difficult to differentiate, we all lost the concept of time. Fear, hunger, lack of fresh air; this is what we knew.

The boxcar doors opened, and SS soldiers, dogs and Jewish inmates known as "Kapos" awaited us. We were all scared. It was like mass chaos. Nazis yelling hurry, "Raus, raus!" or, "Snell," hurry, get off the transport quick. Looking back, they were well organized with their sadistic, deadly technique.

My parents, grandmother and I got off the boxcar. I was only 20 years old on that day. I remember the men being separated from the women. The elderly, sick, the children were to go through what the Germans called "The Selection Process." My mother and grandmother were directed by a man in a white doctors coat to go one way when the man used his thumb to point. I

was directed to other way. I found out that this was the camp doctor, Dr. Josef Mengele, also known as the "Angel of Death."

When I saw my mother being sent away I dropped my little suitcase and ran toward her. A short man came up and grabbed me, I don't know who he was, he said, "You will see your mother and grandmother later tonight, they are going to the bathhouse."

As I learned that night, my parents were sent to the gas chamber and crematorium. My poor grandmother also met this fate.

I was sent to A-Lager to have my head shaved. It was a nightmare, a rag type garment for prison clothes.

In the early mornings we had roll-call. It could be so hot outside and the winters were so cold and harsh, but we had to stand in lines so all could be accounted for. This at times took hours and hours.

The food was almost non-existent. Our mornings consisted of some black water, I suppose it was supposed to be coffee, and a small piece of black bread.

For dinner a small piece of black bread and a tiny portion of meat. We could not figure out what kind of meat it was, it was terrible, but in a starving situation, you eat anything.

Our days were full of inspections, work details. Sometimes we were sent to clean the toilets, which were open-air pits constructed of wood. Very primitive. They were blocks away, so if you were sick, you had to run to a facility. Other work details were working in the kitchen, or manual labor around the camp.

Two weeks after our arrival to Auschwitz, we were tattooed on our arm so the Nazis could keep a record of us. I remember puss coming out of my arm, and other inmates had infections, but we did not say anything. It was known that if you went to a camp hospital for medical help, you never came back alive.

My time in Hell, known as Auschwitz, was about 8 months. From April 1944 to Winter of 1944, December.

While in Auschwitz, we had heard that an invasion by the Allies was happening, or going to happen soon, and that we would be liberated by the United States, Britain or Russia. But life in Auschwitz continued. There were selections every two weeks. This process was done by Dr. Mengele and his staff to weed out the weak, sick Jews who could no longer work for them. These people were gassed. I was getting sicker and weaker from malnutrition, terrible sanitation conditions, living daily in fear. I came down with terrible diarrhea for about a week, I think from

the contaminated water we drank. I was lucky to get back on my feet. I know I could not seek medical help, the end result would have been the gas chamber.

I remember myself and the other women worrying about selections. The doctor would come in and tell us to disrobe - if we had a rash or looked bad, we were sent to death.

I remember the crematoriums were burning day and night. Like a house chimney. I asked the other inmates what was going on. The one friend, Sonja from Hungary, said it was trash. But the other girls I talked with, Sarah and Vera, both from Budapest said it was the Jewish prisoners burning.

I believe it was November or December of 1944, there was a final selection. The SS guards wanted me and some others to stay in Auschwitz, the boxcar was ready to depart and anyone who could make it to the boxcar would go to the next destination. We all figured getting out of Auschwitz was a primary goal and taking a chance somewhere else was at least escaping certain death at Auschwitz for now!

I was with other inmates being held back by some female guards. I broke away from this guard and ran to the boxcar. The guard chased me for awhile, she was a small woman, she had a gun, she could have shot me. She didn't. I was lucky, I boarded the boxcar, there were SS soldiers, dogs and prisoners getting aboard. I remember huddling in the corner of the boxcar, out of breath, heart beating fast and scared.

We were taken to a small factory to do piece work. I remember putting small items together with screws. I have no idea what we were making and asked no questions. I remember dropping something on the work line. the guard came and looked at me, he could have thought I was sabotaging something. I was lucky, he could have shot me on the spot. I was lucky. I was at this facility for 2 months. The Nazis moved us from this place to my final camp, Theresiastadt, a camp near Prague in Czechoslovakia.

This was my last camp. it was Spring of 1945. The Russians came and liberated what survivors were left. I had heard that the Russians were sending Jews to Russia for slave labor, we gladly went with the Czech soldiers.

The Jewish Czech soldiers took us to homes of Czech Jews and told them to feed us well, use their baths and give us clean clothing. From there all trains and transport were rendered to us to go home.

I did not want to go back to Hungry. I was dazed, tired and confused, as would anyone going through such an ordeal.

I kept riding the trains from one stop to another, until finally we were told we had to go somewhere.

I went to a small town where my Aunt had lived. She and her family, the surviving ones, had not returned yet. The people using her home knew I was a niece and took me in for 2 weeks. I found out that my future husband had made it back home and we reunited and got married.

My husband, Emery Dobo, and I married in Budapest and in December of 1947, had our son, Stephen. We immigrated to the United States, where I later obtained my citizenship.

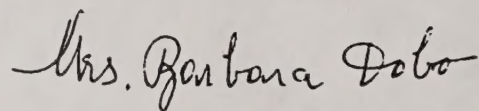
We had two more children that were born in America, another son, Thomas, and our daughter, Susan.

Many other events happened that are unpleasant memories.

Oh, one I would like to tell about at my last days at Theresiastadt. I had old shoes, made of some sort of wood. The female guard came up to me and slapped me very hard. I fell to the floor. She said, "Your shoes need to be polished!" She said, "At the next inspection, if the shoes aren't polished, maybe you would like to go back to Auschwitz?" I thought to myself, "How do I polish wood shoes?" I did clean them up, but just the thought that I could go back to Auschwitz totally scared me, I can't explain the feeling.

A lot of other bad memories come and go, still after all these years I have nightmares. I try to block things out, but, even daily there are memories of an awful time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mrs. Barbara Dobo". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Barbara Dobo

